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Secretary Norton Designates Three Sites in New York as National Historic Landmarks

WASHINGTON-- Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton today announced the designation of the Dutch Reformed Church in Newburgh, N.Y., and the *Modesty* and Rudolph Oyster House, both of West Sayville, N.Y., as National Historic Landmarks (NHL). These are among 15 sites recommended to the Secretary by the National Park System Advisory Board for their national significance in American history and culture.

The 15 new NHLs also include the Sheldon Jackson School, Sitka, Alaska; Fresno Sanitary Landfill, Fresno, Calif.; Samuel Wadsworth Russell House, Middletown, Conn.; Nicholas Jarrot Mansion, Cahokia, Ill.; S.R. Crown Hall, Chicago, Ill.; J.C. Lore Oyster House, Solomons, Md.; Gibson House, Boston, Mass.; Bethania Historic District, Bethania, N.C.; Merchants' Exchange Building, Philadelphia, Pa.; Randolph Field Historic District, Bexar County, Texas; New Kent School and George W. Watkins School, New Kent County, Va.; John Philip Sousa Jr. High School, Washington, D.C.

"These special sites underscore our heritage and tell stories of periods and events in our history," Norton said. "By preserving these unique sites, we share our culture and rich diversity with our children for future generations to learn from and enjoy."

NHLs are identified by theme and special studies prepared or overseen by National Park Service (NPS) historians and archaeologists. The NPS often conducts NHL studies in partnership with federal, state, tribal or local preservation officials; the academic community; independent scholars; and others knowledgeable about a particular subject. The Dutch Reformed Church was nominated for embodying distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type exceptionally valuable for a study of the period, style or method of construction. The *Modesty* and the Randolph Oyster House were nominated for their importance in national maritime history.

"National Historic Landmarks guide us in comprehending important trends and patterns in American history," said Mainella. "These three new Landmarks possess those exceptional qualities that help us as a Nation illuminate and understand our complex national heritage."

The Dutch Reformed Church is nationally significant as an outstanding, largely intact Greek Revival style church designed by Alexander Jackson Davis, one of the style's foremost practitioners. Begun in 1835 and completed in 1837, it is the last extant Greek Revival style church directly attributable to Davis that retains design integrity consistent with the architect's original intentions. It remains perhaps the finest and most extensively documented example from a dwindling body of ecclesiastical work associated with one of the premier architects active in nineteenth century America. The building is distinguished by an exceptionally bold and skillfully designed composition, featuring a monumental pedimented Ionic portico and dramatically scaled entrance. Sited in imposing fashion on a bluff overlooking the approach up the Hudson River from the Highlands, the church commanded the attention of all northbound river traffic, at a time when this waterway lay at the very heart of the nation's economic expansion and cultural consciousness. The Dutch Reformed Church is a potent

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reminder of the early part of Davis' career, a time when his gifted hand contributed significantly to the emergence of the Greek Revival style in the United States. It is a dignified statement of the architect's virtuosity and vision, a nationally significant cultural landmark recalling the early history of the American republic.

Modesty is a classic Long Island Sound shellfish dredging sloop. Although Modesty was built at the end of the age of commercial vessels working under sail and after the peak of the local shellfish industry, she is a nearly unaltered example and typical of the hundreds of sloops engaged in the northern oystering and scalloping industry during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Modesty is described a true "south-sider," or sloop from the southern shore of Long Island Sound, and as "the best possible example of the northern oyster sailing dredger," the New York type. It is believed Modesty, which operated as a scallop dredger from 1923 until at least the early 1930s, is the last extant scallop dredger which operated under sail power.

The Rudolph Oyster House is a substantially unaltered marine industrial building overlooking the Great South Bay on Long Island, New York. While most successful seafood processing plants underwent a series of alterations and additions throughout their operation, the Rudolph structure is a rare surviving example of a relatively unaltered early-20th-century seafood packing plant. Today, the structure is part of the Long Island Maritime Museum's interpretation of the commercial oyster fisheries of the adjacent Great South Bay. The Rudolph Oyster House is the only known surviving structure from the Great South Bay "Blue Point" oyster industry dating from the turn of the century. The structure is still located in West Sayville on the water just off Great South Bay, approximately 600 feet from its original site. If the structure had not been moved it would have been demolished. The present location provides a setting more like its original setting than if it had not been moved. Development at its original location on South Shore Road has destroyed its original integrity and setting. The setting of the structure at the Long Island Maritime Museum includes vintage vessels dating from the turn of the century.

All NHLs are included in the National Register of Historic Places, which is the nation's official list of the cultural resources and historic properties worthy of preservation. Landmarks constitute 2,341, or roughly 3 percent of approximately 73,000 sites listed in the National Register; the others are of state and local significance.

Most NHLs are owned by private individuals or groups. Others are owned by local, state, tribal, or federal government agencies, or may have mixed public-private ownership. Owners of NHLs are free to manage their property as they choose, provided no federal license, permit, or funding is involved. The owner agrees to observe simple preservation precepts with respect to the property and receives technical advice and assistance from preservation experts if needed.

Landmark designation offers advantages to owners who wish to preserve their properties. A bronze plaque bearing the name of the NHL and attesting to its national significance is presented to the owner upon request. NHL owners may be able to obtain federal historic preservation funding, when funds are available, and federal investment tax credits for rehabilitation as well as other provisions may apply.

The historic importance of potential landmarks is evaluated by the NPS and by the National Park System Advisory Board during meetings held twice a year that are open to the public. The Advisory Board includes citizens who are national and community leaders in the conservation of natural, historic, and cultural areas. Recommendations by the Advisory Board are made to the Secretary of the Interior on potential NHLs. Final decisions regarding NHL designations are made by the Secretary. Additional information on the National Historic Landmark program can be found on the NPS website at <http://www.cr.nps.gov/landmarks.htm>.

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